

# Let's Get *Building!*

A **practical guide** for homeowners planning construction or remodeling projects in the City of Carlsbad



CITY OF  
**CARLSBAD**

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## Greetings!



*My name is Mike Peterson, and I am the City of Carlsbad's development services manager. My job is to help anyone who wants to build in the city – whether you're a homeowner, a developer, or a contractor – to make Carlsbad's review and permit process as quick and easy as possible.*

*I am here as a resource for homeowners who want to put in a backyard pool, construct a room addition or build a deck or patio cover. I can answer questions, direct you to the right city staff person or take a look at your plans and let you know if you are on the right track.*

*This guide is also intended as a resource as you begin your home improvement project. In it, you will find information about the steps involved in taking a project from start to finish, the types of projects that generally do and do not require a permit, and who to work with at the city to get the approvals, permits and inspections you need.*

*In most cases, you will work directly with staff from the city divisions that oversee the building process – Planning, Building, Fire Prevention and Land Development Engineering. But, if for any reason you need additional help or are unsure who to talk to, I am available to assist you.*

*Our development review process is meant to maintain the high quality of Carlsbad's neighborhoods and ensure that all development and construction is carried out in a safe and legal manner.*

*Please don't hesitate to call. I am here to help.*



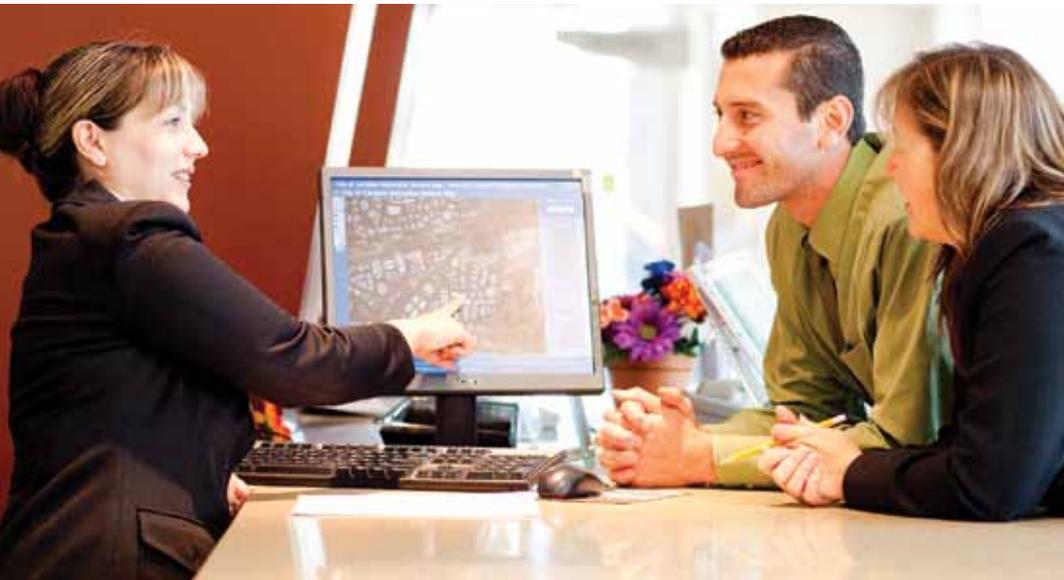
**Mike Peterson**, Development Services Manager, City of Carlsbad  
760-602-2721, [Mike.Peterson@carlsbadca.gov](mailto:Mike.Peterson@carlsbadca.gov)

# Getting started

The city encourages homeowners to contact the Planning Division to learn about guidelines for their project before they start digging postholes, pounding nails or sawing boards. For example, homeowners who want to build a backyard deck can find out from Planning staff about setbacks (the required distance between a structure and the property line), which could affect the size of the deck that would be allowed. That way, homeowners can avoid spending money on work that might later have to be altered or removed.

Once a homeowner has visited the Planning counter to find out about setbacks, lot coverage and other zoning standards, the next step is to go to the Building counter to get information about the specific building codes related to a project. Using the example of a deck, Building can tell you the size of the concrete footings that are required.

To get a building permit, homeowners will submit a site plan, which shows a bird's-eye view of the existing structure on the property, the distance to property lines and the lot coverage. Staff will then attach approved construction details to the site plan.



The City of Carlsbad's development services are available on a walk-up basis, and no appointment is needed. If the project is not in an area with special restrictions, building permits for minor improvements, such as a gas line for an outdoor fireplace or a backyard deck, can generally be issued over the counter with payment of the required permit, plan-check and inspection fees.



## Permits

Following are some of the types of projects that **do** require permits:

- In general, any type of work involving alterations to electrical, plumbing or mechanical systems requires a building permit. (However, no permit is required for changing light fixtures, if the wiring is not altered.) For minor electrical, plumbing or mechanical work, a permit will be issued over the counter
- Patio covers, decks and enclosures
- Room additions or enlargements
- Retaining walls more than four feet high, measured from the bottom of the footing
- Water heater replacement
- New roof. Shake or wood shingles are no longer allowed for re-roofing or new roof
- Swimming pool or spa

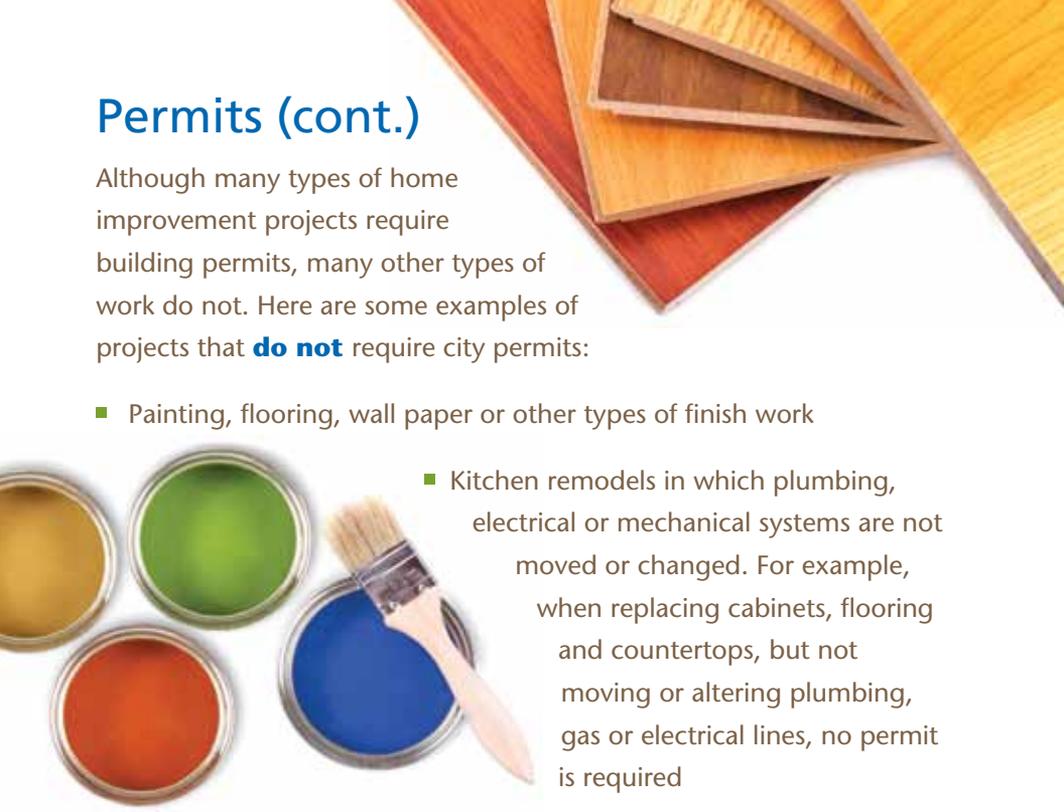


## Permits (cont.)

Although many types of home improvement projects require building permits, many other types of work do not. Here are some examples of projects that **do not** require city permits:

- Painting, flooring, wall paper or other types of finish work
- Kitchen remodels in which plumbing, electrical or mechanical systems are not moved or changed. For example, when replacing cabinets, flooring and countertops, but not moving or altering plumbing, gas or electrical lines, no permit is required
- The city does not regulate fences 6 feet high or less in rear or side yards, so no permit is required. Front-yard fences have setback requirements, i.e., the distance from the fence to the property line
- Retaining walls less than 4 feet high as measured from the bottom of the footing, such as those that border a garden or lawn, do not require a permit

Stormwater run-off regulations require sediment and dirt from construction to be prevented from washing into storm drains or off the property. Where required, the city issues stormwater permits for construction projects and performs the related inspections.



## Permit fees

The city charges fees for permits to cover the costs of reviewing plans, ensuring compliance with building codes and fire safety measures and inspecting all new construction. Homeowners are responsible for paying those fees when they pick up their permits.

Some fees, such as those for basic plumbing, electrical and mechanical work, are standard, while others are based on the size of the project, such as a pool, deck, new roof or room addition. For information on fees for specific projects, please contact city staff.

A cashier is available at the development services counter to collect required permit fees.



# Inspections

Home improvement projects that require a building permit must also undergo inspections by the city's specially trained building inspectors during and after construction.

For example, on a deck project, a city building inspector must sign off on the holes dug for the deck's footings before the holes are filled in, to



ensure the footings will have the proper depth and width to support the structure.

Another inspection is required when the project is completed, and as long as all of the components of construction are visible, these would be the only inspections for a deck.

The inspector will then sign off on the permit to indicate that all requirements have been met.

Homeowners can schedule inspections by calling a recorded line at **760-602-2725** and leaving their permit number, project address and type of inspection, along with a contact number. Requests received by 4 p.m. will generally be scheduled for an inspection by the next business day.

Alternatively, building inspections can be requested by email at [BuildingInspections@carlsbadca.gov](mailto:BuildingInspections@carlsbadca.gov). The same information as above should be included in the email, and as with telephone requests, email inspection requests received by 4 p.m. will generally be scheduled the next business day.



## Home improvement review checklist

- Contact Planning Division** to determine whether your proposed project is allowed on your property and the regulations that may affect your project.
- Speak with Building Division** to obtain specific parameters for your project, i.e. requirements for size of footings.
- Submit site plan to city staff for approval.** For many projects, building permits can be issued over the counter.
- Pay required fees** to cashier.
- Schedule** construction inspection.
- Schedule final** inspection and receive signoff for project completion.
- Enjoy** your new improvement!

When the inspectors' workload permits, inspections can be set for a morning or afternoon time frame to accommodate the homeowner's schedule. Such requests can be made by telephone on the morning of the inspection.





## Location, hours and contact info

The city's development services are located at the City of Carlsbad's Faraday Center, 1635 Faraday Ave. The center is open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday.

The following contact information will help you get in touch with the right staff person. The divisions listed below are located at the Faraday Center.

- Mike Peterson . . . . . 760-602-2721**  
**development services manager**
  
- Building . . . . . 760-602-2719**
  
- Planning . . . . . 760-602-4610**
  
- Fire Prevention . . . . . 760-602-4666**
  
- Engineering . . . . . 760-602-2750**
  
- Building inspection request line . . . . . 760-602-2725**
  
- Building inspection email requests . . . . . BuildingInspections@carlsbadca.gov**

# Who we are and what we do

The following is an overview of the four city divisions that supervise construction and development in the City of Carlsbad, and brief descriptions of their responsibilities:

## Planning

Planning is a good place to start for any type of home improvement project.

- Reviews the project's design to ensure it meets city codes. For example, Planning staff determines if setbacks – the distance between a structure and the property line – are adequate.
- Reviews parking and landscaping elements of commercial and industrial projects and determines which permits are needed for projects based on their location in the city, the type of project and the project's size and scope.
- Administers the development regulations of the California coastal zone.

## Building

- Looks at construction plans to determine if they meet state and local building codes with regard to structural, electrical, plumbing, energy and mechanical elements.
- Issues building permits for projects that comply with building codes and have received all required approvals. Building is also responsible for conducting necessary inspections for all new construction.



# Who we are and what we do (cont.)

## Land Development Engineering

- Reviews project elements, including grading, roads, drainage and utilities.
- Checks grading plans and issues grading permits.
- Ensures that roads are designed with proper turning radius and that fees are assessed for impacts on infrastructure, such as roads, parks or sewer lines (on larger developments).
- Handles easements, storm water management plans and lot-line adjustments.

## Fire Prevention

- Looks at construction plans to determine if they meet state and local fire codes.
- Reviews plans for automatic fire sprinkler systems as required by the state codes in new construction projects from new homes to commercial buildings.
- Regulates construction in fire suppression zones, which are adjacent to open space.

